

of Puerto Rico and you want to build a 92-mile natural gas pipeline over mountains and through forests and lakes and rivers and across critical groundwater systems in Puerto Rico, you would amend a law designed to deal with natural resources so that you can bypass the normal permitting and public process.

What the ruling party does is declare an "energy emergency" on the island. This government's energy emergency allows the pipeline to proceed, despite warnings from the Sierra Club, the environmental group Casa Pueblo, and even the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; despite residents' concerns that it would be constructed near schools and churches and residential areas; despite geologists noting that it is near earthquake faults and that there have been 2,500 seismic events in the last 3 years on the island, and one just felt all over the island just 2 days ago.

The self-described "energy emergency" also helps hide the fact that you've given a \$10 million contract to a pal of the Governor who has no experience at constructing gas pipelines. He does, however, have experience skiing with the Governor. And maybe that's why you run a slick, taxpayer-funded PR campaign that renames the project "The Via Verde"—"The Green Way."

So instead of speaking to huge financial, human, and environmental costs, this Orwellian ad campaign calls a gas pipeline over mountains and through the woods and rivers a "green way." Like a lot of people, I think it would be better to be named just "Green Away," a magical cleanser that you apply to your forests, rivers, and lakes, and it makes them go away, along with the millions of green tax dollars.

Here's an even more honest name for this project: "The Wrong Way." Because it's wrong to spend the people's money on a project they don't want and hasn't been appropriately studied, as the newspaper *El Nuevo Dia* has shown in a series of reports.

Candidate Fortuño was right; Governor Fortuño is wrong. It's time to shine some light on this matter.

I have sent Freedom of Information Act requests to every and all Federal agencies that have addressed the pipeline in Puerto Rico. I will release the results so that the people know whom their government is meeting with, what documents exist, and what studies have been done to show the need for this project. Furthermore, I have already urged the Army Corps of Engineers to deny the permit request for the pipeline until experts testify, permits are applied for, community meetings are held, and environmental impact studies are done.

Maybe the government can make the case for this project in the light of day, but they shouldn't be asking for a verdict without presenting their facts to the people first. It's time they stop doing things the "Via Verde" way and start doing things the right way.

The 1st of May all to Adjuntas.

RAMON CORTINES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. CHU) for 2 minutes.

Ms. CHU. Today I want to honor a man, Ramon Cortines, for his many years serving students in our public school system.

Ramon recently announced he was retiring as superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District. During his distinguished 55-year career in education, he has served as superintendent of schools in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, Pasadena, and New York City.

I had the great privilege to work with Ramon last year when the Los Angeles Unified School District passed a resolution calling for immediate passage of the DREAM Act.

But Ramon was not only a superintendent and advocate, he was a teacher in Aptos and Covina, which is in my district, and senior adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Education under President Clinton.

A lifelong educator, Ramon has taught at every level in the public school system—elementary, middle, and senior high school—and has shaped education policy as a consultant to every entity from Stanford University to the University of California.

Ramon came to the Los Angeles Unified School District at a time of great challenge; yet he was able to improve school safety, increase attendance, and reduce the dropout rate. Ramon Cortines has had an extraordinary record of service, and he changed the lives of thousands of children.

Although he will be greatly missed, we must all continue the mission he strived for during his 55-year career, and that is to ensure that every child receives a quality education.

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2012 BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEUTCH. Tomorrow, my Republican colleagues will bring a 2012 budget to the floor of the House, a budget that rolls back generations of progress and, quite simply, ends Medicare as we know it.

Fifty years ago, before Medicare and Medicaid were signed into law, Americans preparing to retire faced tremendous uncertainty. Private health insurance was simply out of reach. Savings put away during years of employment could barely cover those bills, if they could cover them at all. Seniors were forced to rely on their own children, many of whom were struggling to raise families of their own, to pay for medical care.

When the financial support of family and relatives was not an option, elderly Americans found themselves with the choice of a life without the care of doctors or a life of destitution. This was

the status quo before Medicare and Medicaid were signed into law, and the American people found it unacceptable.

We believed then, as we believe now, that we have a responsibility to ensure that seniors, children, and the permanently disabled, the most vulnerable in our society, have access to quality health care. It was this sense of shared responsibility that Congress codified in 1965 through the creation of Medicare and Medicaid.

As President Lyndon B. Johnson said as he signed this historic legislation, "No longer will older Americans be denied the healing miracle of modern medicine. No longer will illness crush and destroy the savings that they have so carefully put away over a lifetime so that they might enjoy dignity in their later years."

Today, 45 million seniors depend on Medicare's guaranteed quality benefits. Now this year, as in every year, we find ourselves in the middle of a budget debate. At times, both Republicans and Democrats can be accused of hyperbole. However, it is no exaggeration to say that the Republican budget headed to the House floor tomorrow abandons America's seniors and does away with the concept of guaranteed Medicare benefits. It is no overstatement to say that it hands Medicare over to the private health insurance industry, and it is no lie to say that this plan ends Medicare as we know it.

This budget is no Path to Prosperity; for seniors, it is a path to the poor house. You can call it premium support; you can call it a voucher; you can call it a coupon; you can call it the golden ticket if you'd like; but changing the name won't change the fact that this Republican plan will force America's seniors to hand over most of their income to America's insurers. Maybe instead of "premium support," this plan should be called "insurance company profit assistance."

By the time the Republican plan begins distributing coupons to seniors in 2022, most retirees will be unable to afford health care. After all, these coupons will be worth only 32 percent of the insurance bill. According to the nonpartisan analysts at the Congressional Budget Office, in less than two decades a private health insurance plan as good as Medicare will cost about \$30,000. Unfortunately, the Republican voucher that will be sent out under this budget plan will only be worth \$9,700. This means that there will be an insurance bill worth about \$21,000 sitting in the mailboxes of America's seniors.

The Republican budget plan is no work of genius; it just shifts the burden of rising health care costs from the Federal Government to seniors and calls it a day. Through Medicare, Americans made a moral commitment as a people to ensure that seniors are not bankrupted by a hip replacement or diabetes medication. Likewise, with Medicaid, we made a moral commitment to ensure that elderly nursing